

THEOSOPHY

RELIGION
SCIENCE
PHILOSOPHY

SCOTT'S MANUAL

FIRST

9

SERIES

TRUE, SEMI-AND
SEUDO-OCULTISM

True, Semi- and Pseudo-Occultism

By
ANNIE BESANT

Price 25 Cents

THE THEOSOPHICAL PRESS

"Olcott," Wheaton, Ill.

1941

True, Semi- and Pseudo-Occultism

I ask you to consider with me what I may perhaps define as, first, occultism, then what may be called semi-occultism, and, thirdly, the out-growths which follow and surround these and which are specially marked and active at any time when true occultism is working in the world.

It is a very common blunder to suppose that spiritual forces have in them something unpractical, and we continually notice an assumption, that if a nation, for instance, should turn itself towards a spiritual ideal, or if individuals should devote themselves to the spiritual life, that then such a nation is likely to be undistinguished along other more evident and visible walks in life, and such an individual is likely to lose much of what is called his practical value in the world.

Such a view of life is a blunder, and a blunder of the most complete kind. The setting free of energies on the spiritual plane, has a far greater effect both on the individual and on the nation in the other regions of its activity than can be produced by any of the forces that are started on the lower planes of life. When a spiritual energy is set free it works down through the other planes of being, giving rise on each plane to a liberation of energy, and bringing about results great in proportion to the nature of the spiritual force. So that it is true in history, as you may find by study, that when spiritual forces are liberated the intellectual life of the nation will also leap forward with tremendous energy, the emotional life of the nation will show fresh development, and even on the lowest plane of all, the physical, results will be brought about entirely beyond anything that could have been achieved by the energies of the physical plane which are set to work and which apparently cause these results. That is a principle, a law, that every force initiated on the higher planes, as it passes down to the lower, brings about results proportionate to itself; so that it is the shortest-sighted

view of human life which imagines that devotion to the spiritual life is anything but a lifting up of the world on the great ladder up which it is climbing.

But there is another principle that we must also bear in mind, and it is this: that as forces are liberated on any plane, the results brought about by those forces will vary in their character according to those who utilize the energies after their liberation. As we have often pointed out to you here, energies on the different planes of nature are not what we call good or bad in themselves. Force is a force; energy is an energy. When we bring in the idea of good and evil, of right and wrong, of morality and immorality, these ideas are connected with the results brought about by individuals in the utilization of the forces. A time, then, of great spiritual energy, will be marked by activities of opposed characters on the lower planes of being, and those energies which are liberated on each plane may be taken up and used by individuals for what we should call either good or evil. The great mark of good or evil is the use that the individual is making of these forces; whether he is using them for the uplifting of humanity,

or whether he is simply trying to grasp them for his own separate ends, serving his own purposes without regard to the divine economy. This, then, we will bear in mind in following out the lesson that thus we learn applied to that great spiritual movement which is manifesting itself in the world and of which The Theosophical Society is one of the potent expressions.

To begin with, what is occultism? The word is used and misused in the most extraordinary ways. H. P. Blavatsky once defined it as the study of mind in nature, meaning by the word mind, in that connection, the study of the Universal Mind, the Divine Mind, the study of the workings of God in the Universe, the study therefore of all the energies which, coming forth from the spiritual centre, work themselves out in the worlds around us. It is the study of the life side of the Universe, the side from which everything proceeds and from which everything is moulded, the looking through the illusory form to the reality which animates it; it is the study which underlies all phenomena; it is the piercing through the veil of *Mâyâ* and perceiving the reality, the one Self, the one Life, the one Force, that which is in everything and

all things in it. Such a study must necessarily mean the development of the highest spiritual faculties, for only by the Spirit can the Spirit be known. We speak continually of proving this, that, or the other spiritual thing. There is no real proof possible of Spirit, save through Spirit; there is no proof of the intellect, no proof of the emotion, no proof of the senses which is proof when you come to deal with the reality of the Spirit. Nothing of the nature of proof along those lines, whether sensuous, emotional, or intellectual, can be anything more than a reflection of the truth, an analogy which may lead us on the right path, but proof in the true sense of the word it never can be. And it has been written truly in one of the great Indian scriptures and repeated over and over again in the other scriptures of the world, that there is in the full sense of the word no proof of God save the belief in the Spirit, for only the Spirit that is akin to Him, and that is Himself, is able to know, is able to touch.

Looking at real occultism as thus defined, realizing that no one can be in the full sense of the word an occultist save one in whom the spiritual nature is developed

and active, we should, in our next step, be able to separate off from this true occultism very much that goes by its name both in the past and the present. But we should need, in separating off all these forms of so-called occultism, to distinguish between those which may be said, in a sense, to be stepping-stones to the real, and other forms which are not really included under the name of occultism in any true sense of the term, those things which H. P. Blavatsky once spoke of as occult arts, and which for many people seem to include everything they regard as occultism—arts in which certain forces of nature are utilized and in which faculties are developed on various planes in nature below the spiritual; for there are worlds above what we call the physical, but still below the spiritual regions, with which the development of certain faculties brings man into touch, enabling him to control and utilize their forces. There are almost myriad arts and lines of study of this kind which ought never by any real student, by any one who is seeking the higher truth, to be included in his thought when that thought is turned towards occultism.

True occultism, then, is that to which at

first I would ask you to turn your thoughts, and its pursuit implies, as I have said, the development of the spiritual nature. The moment we speak of the development of the spiritual nature we must at once recognize that for the larger number of us that development must necessarily lie in the future, but that we may begin to work towards it to-day; that it is of enormous import to our true progress that we should recognize it and work towards it, and not, by misunderstanding the nature of that development, waste our time, waste possibly many lives, by following blind alleys and mistaken roads. The development of the spiritual nature must succeed — and this is one of the most important points that we can realize — must succeed the purification of the lower parts of our nature. We must be pure emotionally and intellectually, we must have reached a certain stage, at least, of the elimination of the personality before anything that can rightly be called spiritual progress is within our reach. No amount of mere intellectual development — and I will come back to that point, for I do not wish in any way to depreciate that most necessary line of human growth — but no amount of mere

intellectual development will of itself bring about the growth of the spiritual nature. The principle that we call the intellect is the analyzing, the dividing, the separative principle. The very purpose of its evolution is the building up of the individual, it is that which limits, which separates, which marks off the man from every other man, which makes what we may call that coating of selfishness which is absolutely necessary as one stage in evolution. It is a stage through which all humanity must pass, but which, regarded by itself, makes all those illusions which the Spirit transcends. So that what we might call the very principle of illusion is represented by this intellectual faculty.

Necessary as its evolution is, none the less it is on this point in antagonism to spiritual evolution; for spiritual evolution means the recognition and the growth of the One Self into manifested activity, first within that sheath which has been formed by the intellect, and then by transcending it and bringing about that realized unity which is the object of our human evolution. It is for this that we place the unity of mankind in the spiritual regions, it is for this that we proclaim the brotherhood of

man as a spiritual reality; for the Spirit is one, and it is only as that unity is recognized, consciously known — not simply intellectually seen, but consciously realized — it is only as that is done that the spiritual nature is in course of evolution. Inasmuch as the intellect is separative and the Spirit unifying, inasmuch as the one gives rise to illusion while the other transcends it, as the one is the source both of individuality and of personality, whereas the other is the source of that oneship which we seek and shall realize — you will readily see how in the course of evolution these two parts of the nature cannot be regarded as causally related in the strict sense of the term, and we cannot say that by the evolution of the intellectual nature the spiritual nature will inevitably develop. On the contrary, we have to learn that we are not the intellect, but are to use the intellect as an instrument; that we are not the separated self, but the One Self living in all. That is the object of our evolution, that the goal of our pilgrimage; and therefore occultism, which means the study and the development of the spiritual nature, must transcend completely the intellectual evolution. Recognizing this, we shall naturally

look forward to the spiritual evolution as a thing to be worked for rather than to be accomplished from the stage at which we are at present. We should also be prepared to realize the immense difficulty of such an achievement, to understand how much will have to be done with the character and with the nature, how tremendous are the demands that we shall have to meet, before anything which in the strict sense of the term can be called occultism will be at all within our reach.

In the history of the past, where true occultism was the life of the world, where that great fount of spiritual life flowed from the Beings in whom the spiritual nature was wholly developed, it was obviously not possible that their knowledge, their powers, their work could be largely shared in by undeveloped humanity or even by the comparatively advanced humanity that surrounded them. Still less was it possible that any great part of their teaching or any true comprehension of their work and their methods could be known to the people at large; and yet it was necessary that links should be made, that steps, as it were, should be created. The result of this necessity was that men who were

advanced — although in them the spiritual nature was not yet wholly evolved — men of great powers, who stand out in history as giants in humanity, strove to make possible for the advancing ranks of mankind some realization of the methods that might be adopted whereby approach might be made to the spiritual regions.

These men, great as they were, were not, as I have said, men in whom the spiritual nature was wholly developed. Their evolution in many cases — and I speak with all reverence of those so much greater than ourselves — may even be said to have gone along one line in excess of other lines of their growth; so that one man might have enormously developed intellectual power but less perfection perhaps of moral character; another might be keenly alive to the religious necessities of man and not so much interested in his philosophical evolution; another, again, might have turned his attention towards the development of certain sides of man's nature which would touch the physical regions of existence, and even to the forcing of faculties in man, which, when built up from below, would bring him into touch with parts of the astral or the lower mental world, and might force

those faculties and the part of his nature to which they belong in advance alike of mental and moral evolution. So that looking back into the ancient history we find great teachers, of many different types, each giving to the nation some great gift from his thought or from his knowledge, intended to help the more advanced souls of that nation towards progress which should end in spiritual evolution. Hence, to take one line of growth, the great philosophical systems which we find in Indian thought, such a system for instance as the Vedânta. Regarded as an intellectual system of pure philosophy, it puts in a magnificent intellectual form a view of the Universe, of the One Self, and of its manifestations as illusory in the deepest philosophical sense, that serves as an intellectual training. This system, when studied apart from the Yoga that alone can make it practical, may be classed under the head of semi-occultism. It is a system true within its own realm, a system intended to help forward the progress of mankind, only capable of being studied by souls already advanced in mentality; but none the less it is not the spiritual truth; it is only an intellectual presentment of one aspect of it.

It is a thing that must always be remembered, that the Spirit can never be expressed in terms of the intellect, that the One can never be grasped in the terms of the many, and that any intellectual presentment of spiritual truth must necessarily be partial, must be, as has often been said, a coloured glass through which the white light is seen. One, then, of the great gifts to ancient India coming in this way as the result of true occultism, as the result of the mighty spiritual life, was the philosophy of the Vedānta and all those intellectual systems intended for the training of man, and giving, so far as the intellect could give it, a view of the spiritual reality. But remember the saving clause, "as far as the intellect could give it." The intellectual view is only a partial view; and such a view can never make him realize it in consciousness, or give the true knowledge which comes alone through the evolution of the spiritual nature itself.

Along another line of activity would come the many schools of Yoga. Some of them were designed to develop the higher intellectual consciousness in man by means of concentration, by means of meditation, and thus to bring him into touch with the

higher regions of his being; they were intended to lead him, stage by stage, to get free from the body, to pass consciously into higher worlds, so that his consciousness might function in those more extended realms of being. And we find many of the teachings of Yoga carefully adapted to aid the evolution of the loftier mental faculties. They are, again, a stepping-stone offered, but still coming under this heading that I have called semi-occultism. Other schools were founded which dealt with man in different fashion, which strove to force his faculties from below, to force the evolution and the training of the astral faculties, to bring him first into touch with the astral world. These have generally been classed as the schools of Hatha Yoga, and in them various methods were employed dealing with the lower vehicles of man. The power of the will was also enormously developed, the man was taught to be master of his lower nature and so to take what in very many cases was a real step upwards, although we cannot include it in any sense of the term under the heading of true occultism.

It must be remembered when dealing with all these schools, when looking at

them and striving to learn alike their use and their abuse, that it is a great thing for a man to become master of his passions, it is a great thing to subject the animal nature, to be able to stand unshaken, no matter what temptations may assail the lower man. And very many of these schools have yet in them this element, that they at least recognize that man's intellectual nature should be master of his sensuous nature and that he should learn complete control over the body, complete control over the passions. And even along many of the darker lines of evolution, even in the schools that tread the path which all those who would reach the highest should most carefully avoid, it is none the less true that the subjugation of the lower nature is most rigorously insisted upon. Many of the followers of those schools lead lives which, so far as that side of the nature is concerned, might be taken as examples by an enormous majority of the men of the western world.

The whole of these different schools rose and flourished in ancient India as the result of the great downpouring from the spiritual regions on to the lower planes, and naturally they were used both for selfish and

for unselfish purposes. But in dealing with all those schools of Yoga which develop the higher forms of intellectual consciousness, it is well to remember that it is a necessary stage of our progress that we should use meditation, that we should be accustomed to contemplate intellectually and emotionally the ideals which appeal to us by their grandeur and their nobility. Those are stages that many might well be utilizing, with a view to the deeper wisdom of the future. Men took up these varying lines of evolution, stirred fundamentally by the prompting of the Divine Life within them; stirred, so far as they themselves were conscious, by the natural and rightful desire for higher evolution. For, as we have often seen when we have been studying progress, we cannot leap at a bound to the heights of the spiritual life; we have to climb step by step, we have to utilize the higher thoughts in us for the subjugation of the lower, and then in turn to outgrow that higher when a greater height comes within our sight and within our reach. We have learned that we may constantly eliminate lower ambitions by nourishing a higher ambition. It is well continually to kill out our lower by our higher desires, though even

those higher in their turn seem lower as we are rising above them and greater perfection comes slowly within our gaze. So that this longing for a higher life, this yearning for progress, had, and have, their rightful place in evolution; and it is out of the ranks of those who use the methods which make progress possible, that are taken those who are capable of further evolution. The true life is the life which is spent as part of the Divine Life, pouring itself out for others; and no life is true, no life spiritual, save when the very idea of the separated life is entirely transcended, and all the thought of the being, all the energies of the life, are poured forth as part of the One Self. Service is then the natural expression of the life, helping is that in which the true existence is felt. But ere it is possible that this ideal can be even intellectually realized, some progress, at least, must have been made in transcending what we recognize as the personality; and it was in order to make that possible to every man immersed in illusion, as all men have been and are, that the various methods were suggested by those who would fain help their fellows forward.

Others, seeing in the religious instinct in

man his easiest upward path, gave to the world the various forms of religion, thus making the path upwards suitable for those whose constitution attracted them chiefly in the direction of love and of service. Seeing, then, that all these methods of growth were most active at the time when the real life was working at the heart of things, it will not be difficult to understand how, as that life found fewer channels for its expression in the world, fewer who were ready to transcend their own limitations and to give themselves wholly as channels of the Divine Life, all these methods lost their vitality and a great part of their usefulness.

It is hardly worth while to remind you that while semi-occultism may serve as a stepping-stone to real occultism, pseudo-occultism is generally a distinct obstacle and hindrance. Under this heading may be classed all the "occult arts," in the study of which many promising beginners have lost their way and wasted their lives. Geomancy, palmistry, the use of the tarot, etc., all these things are well enough for those who want to tread the by-ways of nature and to gather knowledge of her obscurer workings. They may be harmless,

interesting, even useful in a small way, *but they are not occultism and their professors are not occultists.* A little success in their pursuit — and success does not demand high qualities of either head or heart — is apt to breed the most absurd vanity and pretentiousness, as though this dalliance converted a commonplace man into one of its rulers. A man may be past master of all these arts, and yet be further away from occultism than is a pure and selfless woman seeking only to love and to serve, or a generous, clean-souled man, devoted to the helping of his fellows. And if these arts be turned to selfish purposes, or if they nourish vanity, their professor may find himself approaching perilously near to the gateway of the left-hand path.

Looking for the application of this to The Theosophical Society the lesson springs easily enough to our gaze. Again, in our own days, a great outpouring of real life has occurred, again an effort has been made by those who are the guardians of that life for our humanity, to pour out the true spiritual energies for the helping and the uplifting of man in every region of his being. This has been marked by certain definite statements, by hints thrown out

here and there by H. P. Blavatsky who was the special messenger of this possibility opening up for our own race. And there is one phrase which gives us the reality of life: we are told that when a man becomes a real occultist he becomes only a force for good in the world. Here is a sentence that people read without realizing at all its meaning, a sentence that does not strike with its full force on the unprepared mind and heart. For many things may be said which are missed for want of receptivity, and many truths are proclaimed which remain dark and silent, save to those whose eyes are beginning to be opened to see, and whose ears are beginning to be opened to hear. And that statement, which really puts the occult life in a few words, is one that most readers pass by without realizing its significance. There is no true spiritual life, there is no real occultism, until the man at least recognizes that the goal of his living is to become a force for good, and that only, in the world. There is only one thing left within him, the longing to be of service; only one thing the motive of his being, to be a channel for the great life of God, to enable that life to be scattered more effectively over the world of

man, and over all worlds where that life exists.

When that is recognized, even afar off, when that ideal first dimly dawns upon the human heart — come it by way of intellectual apprehension of its sublimity, or by way of devotional recognition of its truth — then for the first time the spiritual life stirs within the man. And so we begin to realize that if true occultism could be reached and understood by any of us, we should have to begin the preparation for it by working at character in the way that every religion has taught. How often it is said, "we know all these moral truths, there is nothing new in Theosophy when it simply reiterates the old morality. When we are told to be unselfish, to seek to help others forward, to eliminate the personality, to kill out our faults, it is all an old story that we have heard to weariness. We want something new, we want some fresh knowledge, some facts of the astral world, some strange things of the mental region — that is what we demand from Theosophy, that is what we are seeking, and we do not desire to have pressed upon us these ethical maxims, these old-world stories which every religion has made fa-

miliar, and which we can hear from any pulpit." And yet the truth of the matter is that along that path only the spiritual life has been and is possible for man; that the Divine Teachers who gave the religions to the world with their perpetual insistence on morality, gave them knowing the spiritual life, and knowing that only along that line the real progress of man into unity with God was possible. And when it was again declared by the lips of the Christ that only he might gain his life who lost it, that those who would be perfect must sacrifice all that they had, when he again reiterated the ancient teaching that narrow was the path and straight was the gateway, he was only repeating what all true occultists have taught as to the necessity of the training for the spiritual life.

As progress is made, all those methods of Yoga which tend to help forward the individual, which are followed in order to gain progress, practised in order to evolve faculties, and used in order that the individual may go faster forward himself — all these are dropped, and Yoga is regarded, not as the means of self-evolution, as we are accustomed to regard it, but as the using of great forces for the lifting and the

helping of humanity, with no thought of progress on the part of him who is wielding them for the helping of man. For in truth all control of higher forces, ought to come only within the grasp of man when he has transcended the personality and has learned to use them only for the helping of all. We readily admit this in the common things of life, and recognize the difference between learning the use of an instrument and the mere holding an instrument without knowing how to use it. A pen, for example, is one of the most useful of instruments, but its utility depends upon the brain and the heart behind it; and a pen in the hands of a child is of no more use than any fragment of wood that the same child might pick up to use as a toy. Very much the same is the grasping of the forces of the super-physical world by those who have not yet conquered the lower nature and consecrated themselves wholly to the divine service. They are, truly, picking up an instrument which may be used for the highest and noblest ends; they are, truly, placing their hands upon a tool which in hands that know how to use it may serve for the salvation of the race; but unless the spiritual nature be developed, that instru-

ment fails in all its noblest possibilities. And it has this peculiarity, that whereas the pen that I used as symbol might be comparatively harmless in the hands of the child, the grasping of those forces by one in whom the personality is not eliminated may become a source of danger alike to himself and others, and may tend to retard the progress of the race instead of lifting it upwards. That is why some of us who have learned but the mere alphabet of these great truths lay so much stress — stress to weariness, as some think — on the moral training which must precede all attempt at occult study. H. P. Blavatsky gave us the same lesson when she herself said that she had blundered, in teaching part of the alphabet of occult knowledge, without insisting upon that old precept that the moral growth must come before the occult training, and that the character must be purified, raised and spiritualized before any one should dare to lay his hand upon the latch of the occult gate-way. Hence it is that those qualifications that we have so often studied are made qualifications for imitation; hence it is that there has ever been the demand that only the pure should enter.

If I have spoken of the past, if I have reminded you that amongst us to-day the very outburst of the new spiritual life will cause activity on all the lower planes, it is because I would bring the experience of the past to reinforce a lesson so often given, it is because I would warn you of the dangers that surround us on every side. It is our duty as Theosophists, as would-be students of the science of the soul, to be careful that in all things character precede any attempt at the gaining of power, that purity, selflessness, devotion, utter self-surrender, be found in us ere we touch the Ark of occultism — for without these any success is a defeat, without these any attempt is doomed to failure. And surely it is better to learn from the experience of the past than by the bitter suffering that grows out of the personal experience of to-day; better to learn by the authority of the great Teachers who have proclaimed the lesson over and over again, than to have to learn it by the suffering that follows from grasping powers ere we are ready to use them, from plucking the fruit of knowledge ere it is ripe for our consumption, from striving to rule ere yet we have learned to obey, and from endeavor-

ing to snatch at the mighty forces of the spiritual realm until we have learned that great lesson of the Spirit—that only by giving is the spirit shown, that only by utter abnegation is the true life realized. As the very life of God in manifestation is a life that gives everything and asks nothing back, so those who would reach unity with Him and realize what the spiritual life means, must learn to give and not to take, to help and not to hold, to pour out without seeking or looking for return. Only as we learn that do we become fit candidates for the higher knowledge, only as the heart is thus rendered absolutely pure may we dare to face the presence of the Master, hoping that when “He looks at the heart He may find no stain therein.”

The Light and Dark Sides of Nature.

EVERYTHING in this universe of differentiated matter has its two aspects, the light and the dark side, and these two attributes applied practically, lead the one to use, the other to abuse. Every man may become a botanist without apparent danger to his fellow-creatures; and many a chemist who has mastered the science of essences knows that every one of them can both heal and kill. Not an ingredient, not a poison, but can be used for both purposes—aye, from harmless wax to deadly prussic acid, from the saliva of an infant to that of the cobra di capella.

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

In one of the scriptures of our race it is pointed out that at the very beginning of the universe the pairs of opposites appeared. "The pairs of opposites" may be taken as a general name for the light and dark sides of Nature, and a word on this general meaning of the pairs of opposites and on what they imply in Nature may fitly be said in opening.

First, it is impossible to think at all without pairs of opposites; we can only think, that is, by and through duality. If there were but a single thing undifferentiated, always the same, always everywhere, no thinking could arise in that thing. There must be at least two—the thinker and the thing thought of, distinguishable from himself, before what we call "thought" can exist at all. It is because this fact is recognized that in philosophic religious books the phrase which strikes many western thinkers as not only strange but nihilistic is used: Brahman is "without mind." So long as only the One exists nothing that the incarnate intellect can call "thought" or "mind" can be present. There is something deeper than "thought," something which is the root of "thought"; but thought as known by the brain must always imply

duality, for without this we are unable to perceive, perception depending on distinctions. We only know things as we separate them by differences from the things they are not, and classify them with the things they resemble.

The pair of opposites that we are now taking for our consideration is the fundamental pair of opposites, one therefore of vast importance. This pair has long been called "the light and dark sides of Nature." It is the primary pair of opposites arising from the One, the fundamental duality, known to all students as being the nature of the second or manifested Logos. This second Logos in Christian phrase is the "Word made flesh," and in philosophic phrase apart from any special religion, is spirit-matter, male-female, life-form, positive-negative, the two aspects of the One between which the whole universe revolves. "Father-mother spin a web," the web of the universe. In this Logos, the manifested Word, the manifested God, the two poles of existence appear, and between these poles the universe is builded. They exist always together; they are co-eternal, one cannot be without the other. They are never known separated in Nature. With-

out the one the other could not be, could not even be thought. Fundamentally the same in their essence, they differ only in their manifestation. The whole of evolution is the progress of these two side by side, and evolution consists in the differences of proportion between the two. One is more manifest and the other less manifest; one is predominant and the other subservient; always, however, together in whatever part of the universe we may be. In the highest spiritual region life is not alone, but there form is so subtle that it lends itself to the slightest change of the informing life. In the densest region of the universe life is present; but there form is predominant, is rigid, unplastic, and the life is concealed beneath the rigidity of the form. Life implies consciousness, and form is that in which consciousness becomes manifest, and necessarily implies limitation. The two best words for this fundamental duality are really life and form.

The light side, the side of spirit, life or the positive, is the constructive and motive side; the dark side is the side of matter, form, or the negative, and is always subject to destructive transmutation, for only by destruction of forms can a fuller manifesta-

tion of life be made. Light and dark in nature then are the constructive and the destructive forces, both of which are necessary for the evolution of the universe, equally necessary, strange perhaps as that at first may sound. The light and the dark are equally manifestations of the One. For without the light there would be no construction, and therefore no universe, no manifestation; without the dark there would be no destruction and therefore no evolution. For as each form is constructed it becomes a mould in which the life is held; and there could be no evolution unless that form can be destroyed and give place to a form which is higher and nobler. Within that form the life has been accumulating experience which has caused internal growth and differentiation. The form which expressed the life ere that experience was gathered now cramps its further growth and hinders its further expansion. If the life is to evolve, the form that imprisons it must be broken, and a new form must be constructed which will express the new powers of the life. Life is continuous, while forms are transitory and are shaped to successive stages of the life. The form that prisons is broken to

set the life free to enter the form that expresses it. That also will become a prison in its turn to be broken, and so on stage after stage. Thus all evolution depends on the presence of this destructive side of the One Divine Existence, breaking down every form, not for the mere purpose of destruction, but because death is only the dark side of birth, and there is no death in one region of the universe which looked at from another region is not birth. Death and birth in fact are only two correlative names, and they are used in relation to the standpoint of the speaker. The passing of a life out of the region in which it is, is death to its form in that region; but as it passes out of that region by death it appears in the next region by birth. Therefore birth and death are rightly called the wheel of existence—both equally necessary, both equally fundamental; construction and destruction continually succeeding each other, both stages in evolution, and stages which are equally necessary. The manifested Logos, call Him by what name men will, is spoken of in all religions as creator, the unmanifested as destroyer; sometimes He is styled the regenerator, a name which includes both—creation and

destruction being thus seen as the two poles of the one life, and in all manifestation these two are present.

The next stage in our study is an understanding of the three great regions to which the general evolution of ordinary humanity it at present confined, and it is necessary that it should be clearly understood that the question of good and evil does not come into play with regard to these regions *in themselves*. I want to get rid of the idea which is lurking in many minds that "spiritual" means "good" and "material" means evil. Spirit and matter, life and form, are never separated, and in themselves are neither good nor evil.

But spiritual is a name often used to define a particular region in Nature where form is dominated by life, just as much as material is used to indicate another region in Nature where life is dominated by form. Neither life nor form, spirit nor matter is good or bad in itself; both these poles are present in every plane, in every entity, and the entity is good or bad according to the end to which its activity is directed. There is good and evil spirituality just as there is good and evil materiality. The words good and evil have nothing to do

with the fundamental constituents and forces of Nature, and people are constantly getting into a confused condition of mind because they take "spiritual" as meaning good; and then try to deal with the "dark spiritual side" of Nature, finding themselves face to face with what they recognize as evil, and yet find existing in the "spiritual" region. The forces of any region are non-moral, though both constructive and destructive entities are good or evil as they use these forces for or against the Divine Will. We shall avoid confusion, if we consider the planes of Nature as they really exist, and then define each clearly so far as it concerns us.

The word spiritual being used so loosely is apt to be misleading; the third and fourth planes (counting from above downwards) form a region beyond the reach of moral evil, and if these alone are termed spiritual, evil would be excluded from the conception of spirituality. But the word is often applied to the mânasic, or intellectual plane, and as the "Brothers of the Shadow" function thereon, its forces can be turned to evil purposes and are often thus turned.

The two highest planes of the septenary do not concern us, as human evolution in

this manvantara does not touch them. We have thus left five: the âtmic; the buddhic; the mânasic or mental; the kâmic or astral; and the physical. The âtmic and buddhic planes will only be touched by ordinary humanity in future rounds, so that for practical purposes we are confined to the three lower planes, the mental, astral and physical. In these man spends each of his life-periods, repeating the cycle over and over again.

Thus for ordinary humanity we might name the three lower planes spiritual, psychic and physical, and in this way they are often distinguished, for they are the regions of heavenly astral and earthly life, and heavenly life is that which satisfies all the part of man's nature usually regarded as spiritual. This use of the word spiritual brings us into line with the use of it by the different great religions, as with St. Paul's "spiritual wickedness in high places," the Occultist's Black Magicians or Brothers of the Shadow.

Further, the word spiritual is not inappropriate, as in that region of the universe the spirit or life side is predominant, while the matter or form side is completely subordinate. Matter is very rare, very subtle,

and it changes its form with almost inconceivable rapidity. Sometimes the higher region of this plane is even spoken of as formless. It is formless to everything which is below it, because the senses of the lower cannot appreciate the forms of the higher. The lower part of this plane is the region of the lower mind, but matter still remains quite subordinate to spirit, form to life.

In the next, or psychic plane, form is denser though still plastic, and life is more veiled. Both are active, but they are more balanced. Above, life is predominant; in the middle, life and form are balanced; in the lowest plane, or the physical, form is predominant and life is hidden. That is perhaps one of the simplest and clearest ways in which we may recognize the characteristics of these planes.

To pass now to good and evil. Everything which is in accord with the Divine Will and which therefore works for progress and for happiness, is good; everything which works against progress and happiness is evil, no matter whether it be on the highest, on the middle, or on the lowest plane. It is not the forces which are good or evil in themselves, but the use that is made of them. The good or the evil de-

depends on whether they work for progress or against it, whether they work towards the happiness and the perfecting of the universe or against it. On each plane there are forces which can be thus used. The forces in themselves are not good or evil, they are merely spiritual, psychical or physical. They become good or evil according to the purpose for which they are used, and the end which they bring about. Electricity, for instance, is neither moral nor immoral in itself. It is used immorally if it be employed to kill; it is used morally if it be turned to help and to comfort. And so in other regions of the universe. A spiritual force is evil if it be used against progress, for the causing of misery and of destruction; it is good if it be used for progress, for the bringing about of the happiness and the perfection of the universe.

Let us now examine the meaning of the phrase "Divine Will." There is a vast cycle of manifestation which may be regarded for convenience sake as a circle; at every point of the descent spirit and matter are side by side, but there is the change of proportion before mentioned, the spirit becoming more hid-

den and the matter more evident; the change in the ascending line is that the matter becomes more subtle and the spirit becomes more predominant. The Divine Will is the law of progress. This existence, manifesting itself, wills to bring a universe into existence, and to conduct that universe by evolution to perfection. It may of course be asked, why should it will to emanate? That is a question which we cannot answer fully, but we find in existence at the end of a universe a number of self-conscious individuals who were not in existence at its beginning, and who are capable of perfect life, perfect knowledge, perfect bliss. Even from our limited standpoint it must be admitted that this is a reasonable and sufficient purpose for the existence of the universe; it brings into conscious being these blissful all-knowing intelligences who share with the Divine Life that gave them birth its own existence, its own knowledge, its own joy. What a universe is to the manifesting life no words of limited mind may tell. What it gives to those who gain self-consciousness, bliss and knowledge by the process is sufficiently evident to any one who thinks at all.

Now this process at first and all through

must be regarded as double—the light and the dark sides. One of the streams of divine energy is constructive, the other destructive; one of them is life, building forms; the other is death, breaking them up. Both are equally necessary, for destructive energy is going to destroy every form when it has served its purpose, in order that the materials used in the form whose purpose is over may be taken up by the constructive energy and built into a higher form. This process is what we call evolution. At every stage of the downward curve in which form becomes more prominent and life more veiled, forms will be brought into existence by this descending energy. Against it there will be working a destructive energy, which breaks up these forms as soon as their purpose is served, and they become outworn. There are thus two opposing streams of energy, by one of which forms come into existence and by the other of which they are constantly broken up, in order that higher forms may be built from their materials. There is no increase of matter it must be remembered, constant change, constant transmutation, but no increase and no diminution. Evolution consists on the form side of this process of destroying the lower

forms that the higher forms may come into existence.

The next point is at first a little difficult to conceive, even a little startling. Growth is at first from the one to the many, from one existence to a universe of countless forms. "It willed, 'I will multiply.'" Then this descending line must be a process of separation, of making differences in order that an ever-increasing multiplicity of forms may be brought into existence. The key-note of evolution will be separation. As far down as the lowest or most outward point of evolution the key-note of progress is separation. The perfection of a universe is in the multiplicity of its forms, in the variety of the existences that are found in it. The Divine Will will work for separation, will work to make forms which are more and more diverse from each other, in which the fundamental unity of life is more and more hidden. The whole of this growth will be a process of increasing separation. It is said to be a coming down into matter; as things become more and more material they obviously become more and more separated. We may see that in the very density of matter as we know it. If we understand this "descent into matter" we

shall see that under the circumstances of the descending arc the opposition to progress would be the desire to remain one, would be the refusal to take form, would be the unit setting itself to maintain unity instead of accepting separateness. Hence setting itself against the Divine Will — wrong because it is against evolution, against progress, against the perfecting of the universe at this stage — would be, strange as it may sound, the refusal to take form in more and more material shapes.

Those who have really studied may here see a gleam of light on what otherwise may have seemed to them strange; in the wonderful Stanzas of Dzyân it is said that the sin of the mindless is preceded by the refusal of the Sons of Mind to incarnate. That is, that the refusal of spirit, as we will call it for the moment, to take to itself separate form goes before the great sin which was wrought by the mindless men, and has left its traces in some of the higher animal forms. Intelligences awaiting incarnation set themselves against the law of progress.

What at first seems so strange is that everything that now is right, the seeking of unity, the getting rid of separateness,

the dominating of the material — at that stage of progress was wrong; the duty of these intelligences was to descend from the psychical to the physical, in order that a universe might come into existence in multiplicity of forms, in order that this building process might go on in which they were necessary helpers, co-workers with the Divine Will. Opposition to that Will, as ever, brought evil, but the nature of the opposition in this case was the refusal of spirit to enter physical forms, to veil its light in dense matter.

As the evolutionary process went on the spiritual was veiled in the psychical, and then the psychical was veiled in the material and the most material race of men appeared. Yet it was really a rising, descent though it seemed, for it was part of evolution, it was the way to the swifter bringing into existence of self-conscious individuals of our humanity. Without this the perfected manifestation would have been long delayed, without it self-conscious spiritual intelligences could not have developed so rapidly as the harvest of the universe, as the justification of this emanation of the Divine. Thus in this downward sweep of evolution what we now rightly

call evil was then really good. To become separate, to become material was good in those far-off æons. The coming thus into the closest connection with matter of the physical plane brought into existence the human brain, the physical basis of all the faculties of the lower mind, and made possible the acquiring of the knowledge without which the individual could not expand into the divine.

In the process of evolution this lowest point was thus reached, and then there was a change. The utmost separation having been achieved, the utmost multiplicity of forms having been achieved, the utmost multiplicity of forms having been brought into being, then what we call the upward curve began. Life, having made this infinite variety of forms for its own manifestation began to work upon the forms to render them plastic. First the process of differentiation to get the forms, then the working in the forms to make them ductile as the expression of the life. These are the two great stages. The form must be brought into existence, and that means separation; then there must be work from within to make the form the plastic expression of the life. The whole of the upward curve is

used for that second half of the work. Life constantly toiling within these separated forms to make them more plastic, more transparent, working towards unity. Unity must be regained or immortality could not be achieved, for that which is composite cannot last for ever. But it is a unity into which has been absorbed the very essence of all the differences that have been passed through during the circle of evolution. The subtle life-form clothes itself in varied garments, subdividing and becoming more and more separate as it comes downwards, then a life-form separated from all other life-forms by this clothing of denser matter beginning the upward path in which it will work on its material garments, making them more transparent, more subtle, more a mere delicate film, and yet that film containing in itself the essence of every separated form through which it has passed. When at length it arrives on high, having passed into the intellectual sphere, it has in high and spiritualized forms the faculties which were latent in it at the beginning and has become self-conscious and not only conscious. Then it becomes one with others, but has the memory of its separateness behind it, reaching a stage which words must

fail to describe, but which—borrowing a phrase from Madame Blavatsky—I may perhaps call “a conscious entity becoming consciousness.” It keeps the memory which has made it an individual, and yet shakes off from itself everything which separates it from other individuals. It shares their experience and knows their knowledge, and yet is itself. It reaches the state which is spoken as of Nirvâna, which is the very antithesis of annihilation, which extinguishes separateness but keeps everything which by separateness has been gained; it is the All, and yet in it is preserved the subtle essence of memory which was gained when each knew itself as one of many.

In this upward sweep, therefore, it is separateness which is to be gotten rid of, and therefore separateness is called “the great heresy,” therefore it has become the mark of what is called the Black Magician, the brother of the dark side. To keep the self separated from other selves, to seek everything for the separated self, and not for the common self of all, is now the worst sin. The Black Magician seeks for strength in order that he may be strong, whereas the White Magician seeks it in order that all may be strong. The Black seeks knowl-

edge that he may be learned; the White that all may be wise. When the White Brother reaches the spiritual plane, everything that he has gained in upward climbing becomes part of the general store, everything that he has gathered in his passing through the world becomes a common light which radiates in every direction. It is his own truly, but he has shaken off everything that separated him from others. For where he stands there is no separation; there is love, and love knows no separation; there is perfect wisdom, and perfect wisdom knows no separation.

In the upward path then, the dark side will evolve by the desire to be separate, thus working for disintegration, and against progress. The Black Magician evolves by clinging to the separate form, by the desire to possess for the separate self. If that determination to be separate continues, if the desire to be apart from everything instead of being a part of everything persists as man rises upwards, then this one possibility remains: for a time by the tremendous strength that he has gathered, by the mighty knowledge that he has won, by the almost omniscience that he has gained in the long striving upwards,

he can for a time, even in the spiritual region, hold his own against all others, for a time even in that world of unity can preserve a separated self. Not for ever, only for a while. He has won such tremendous force and energy and knowledge that he can hold his own for a time against the Divine Will; he can keep himself apart even against everything which tends towards unity. Such are the great Black Magicians that are spoken of, the "Lords of the Dark Face," mighty in their power, mighty in their knowledge, mighty in the spiritual height that they have gained — very Gods in the manifested universe, but selfish Gods, anti-Gods, and therefore incapable of immortality. For only that can live which is one with the All, and they must break in time. The separated form built apart from its fellows and keeping itself separate whilst the universe is gradually becoming one, being against this upward trend, against the law of progress, is always striking itself against the law. It is deliberately dooming itself to disintegration, for the Divine Energy breaks up every form, and if it keeps separate form it also must be broken up.

Any, if he will, may choose that side.

We all of us are choosing if from time to time. For every force that works for disintegration works for its own destruction; every force that at this period of the world's progress works for its separate self is throwing itself against that mighty stream of destructive energy which breaks and grinds everything to powder in order that it may be rebuilt anew of higher mould. Every agency which works against the whole, everyone who separates himself and works for himself against his brothers, every such force is a force that is working for self-destruction, destruction which is self-chosen and which Nature cannot refuse to give.

Now we can realize what evil means. Evil is everything which works against the Divine Will in evolution. It is everything which works against truth which is God, against unity which is God, against love which is God. Every such force is working against the whole, and if it comes into conflict with the general force which is working upwards, and with those who are the embodiments of that upward tending force, it must inevitably be broken into pieces. The Great White Lodge wars against none, but it goes its way, and that which wars

against it is broken into pieces. It does not war with hatred, it passes upward; it does not use the weapon of wrath and of anger, but it passes upward. Everything which flings itself against it is, by its own act, and not by the act of the White Brotherhood, broken into shivers; it breaks into fragments, while the great force goes on.

Some imagine that the force of the White Lodge is used for destruction, but it is not so. That Lodge is on the upward arc, and the White Brothers are ever on the side of unity; where there is conflict it is the disunity flinging itself against the unity, and as that is unchanging and ever going towards its end, those which fall against it are broken into pieces. Here is the occult meaning of a phrase which is familiar in the Christian Scriptures, that those who fall upon the stone which is the head of the corner are broken; not by the action of that mighty corner stone, but by their own action; not by its disruptive energy — for of disruptive energy it has none—but by virtue that it is changeless and cannot be broken, and that everything that works against it must shiver from the energy with which it flings itself against the law. The whole mighty sweep is the law which

passes downwards and then upwards once again. Everything which is against it is broken, everything which separates itself from it must fall to pieces. Every separated existence must break; only in unity can life proceed, therefore when we study the light and dark sides of Nature in their bearing on our practical life we find that every force of hatred, of disruption that makes against unity, that works for separated fragments and not for one mighty whole — everything that works on that side is under the Black Lodge, is an agency of the Black Brotherhood. When we speak of the dark side of Nature and of those who incarnate the disruptive forces, as the White Brotherhood incarnates the law, the good law of the universe, we know that everyone of us must be on the one side or the other—working for brotherhood or working against it, working for construction or destruction, for building or for breaking, for unity or disuniting.

That is the practical outcome of this study; each of us in striving to lead a life which we would fain should lead us on the upward course and bring us at length into that unity wherefore the universe exists, will do well to scrutinise our own hearts

and our own lives to see whether the forces in us are tending to Truth, to Love, to Unity. Everything that is of these is white. Everything that is against these is black. We *must* co-operate with the one side or with the other, and according to our final co-operation will be the final end of the individual soul.

